

DCI's Message to the CIA Workforce

on the

Bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade

May 13, 1999

I wanted to let you know my thoughts
about NATO's bombing of the Chinese Embassy
in Belgrade.

We are still investigating exactly what
happened here at CIA and in the Intelligence
Community, and Secretary Cohen is doing the
same at DoD. But we know enough at this point

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to say that the Intelligence Community bears a significant share of the responsibility.

CIA misidentified the Chinese Embassy as the Yugoslav Supply and Procurement Directorate. In addition, the extensive process concentrated within DoD to validate, check and approve targeting recommendations did not catch the initial error, principally because DIA, NIMA and EUCOM databases did not contain the correct location of the Chinese Embassy.

There is plenty of blame to go around, but we can take no comfort in that. We cannot minimize the significance of this. And we will not hide behind excuses such as stretched resources or time pressures. It is precisely when the pressure is intense -- and life or death decisions are being made -- that the President and the American public expect us to provide the best intelligence in the world. Clearly, in this case we failed to do that. We did not do our job.

As professionals, we must stand up and take responsibility for our mistakes. We have an even greater responsibility to do everything in our power to prevent this kind of thing from happening again.

Several changes already have been made here, at NIMA, and at DIA. I will report back to you shortly on additional steps we will take to address the problems that contributed to the bombing of the Chinese Embassy.

CIA began an effort last Saturday to look at what happened here at the Agency and to recommend corrective actions. I have put an Intelligence Community team together to do the same thing across the Community. I have asked that the report be completed next week.

I know better than anyone the excellent work that the dedicated men and women of this Agency and the Intelligence Community do every day – work that is vital to peace and stability all around the world. And that includes the great work that we have done on

Kosovo – life-saving work that you can be proud of and that I am proud of. The bombing of the Chinese Embassy stands in contrast to an otherwise outstanding performance.

Our work remains indispensable to our nation. I believe that the President and the Congress and the American public fundamentally understand that. I know that CIA is the world's best intelligence agency, bar none, and I will continue to say so whenever I get the chance. That does not mean we are

infallible. And it certainly does not mean that we cannot do better. We can and we will.